1: Mi Mi Khaing 1-5 (no date) 1946 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

CHAPTER FOUR

647 565 177. 65 BY the time that I was about four years old my father had become a Subdivisional Officer in the Civil Service, and our family had joined the ranks of what has now come to be known as the *min-kadaw* class, an *a-so-ya min* being a government official and *minkadaw* the wife of a *min*. The minkadaws usually referred to were in the great majority the wives of officials of the Burma Civil Service, Class II, and by the time that we were passing through our childhood and adolescent years they already formed a very definite stratum in Burmese society. We children now comparing notes with the children of the minkadaws posted as far apart as Tavoy and Myitkyina can find common characteristics in all the households, from domestic commodities and meal habits to social conventions and standards of wealth. It is as though a new upper middle class has grown up, complete with snobberies, in what was formerly a classless Burmese society, but a class that still keeps itself quite apart from the European gymkhana life of the district towns.

631 647 344 The houses which I can remember, when my father was a Subdivisional Officer in the subdivisional towns of Zigon and Myanaung where he was in charge of the subdivision, or in the divisional headquarters town of Magwe where the whole hierarchy of min from the Commissioner downwards were present, or in the district headquarters town of Maubin where the min ranked down from the Deputy Commissioner and my father was Headquarters Assistant, all bore certain uniform features. They were all wooden, two-storied and large, with a sufficient number of big rooms to have a dining-room and an office room below, a sitting-room above the portico and two big bedrooms, besides little verandahs and odd rooms. They all had a front staircase for common use and one or two ladder-like staircases behind for watermen, sanitation and servants. The kitchen was about 20 yards away, connected by a covered passage, and at the back of the large garden or compound was the *tanya*, a row of rooms for men servants and Indian [251] servants. The garden in front was usually modest owing to frequent changes of occupants, but a minimum amount of flowers for daily vases on the altar had always to be cultivated, and fruit trees were prized highly, guava, mango, marian or citron.

592 357 Unlike most Burmese households we did not have any aunts or other relatives staying with us, but we had our full quota of domestic

dependents in whose company we spent most of our childhood. Min- 592
kadaws divide their servants into "downstairs servants" and "upstairs 357
servants". The downstairs variety are the usual domestics—cook, boy, gardener, office boy and so on. The upstairs variety are not referred to as "servants" (*a-say-khan*); they are girls whose work is all done in the rooms upstairs, who sleep there and spend the greatest part of their day in the quarters inhabited by the family. In many cases this system is one of abuse and oppression. The girls may be poor relatives—cousins in the fourth degree perhaps—or they may be bought up from poor parents who, for a sum of Rs. 25 to Rs. 100 down and intermittent gratuities, will allow their children to go into a theoretically better home. These girls come at any age from seven to fourteen years. They are clothed and fed and their *mon-bo* (sweetmeat money) depends entirely on the mistress they chance upon. When they are young they play with the children of the house and when older they sweep and dust the upstairs rooms—rooms on which we walk only barefoot as distinct from the downstairs rooms swept by an Indian sweeper, and on which they use a feather broom instead of wielding a broom of coconut sticks, thus sealing the distinction; they also wash the personal garments of the household, look after the children and all other housemaid duties. They are rarely kept alone; there may be up to four or five according to the household. The relationship with the family is that of feudal serf or poor relation. [601]
They do not call their employers *thakin* and *thakinma* (master and mistress); they address them as Aunt and Uncle-older-than-own-parents; they call the children of the family elder-brother or sister-so-and-so and address all relatives as the children do, but they have no definite salary, [534]
no rights and no external connections. It is only in rare cases, however, that girls reach the age of thirty in an environment not congenial to them; in ideal circumstances it is the duty of the mistress to settle them in an advantageous marriage by the time they are twenty-one or twenty-two. Failing this, the girls generally manage to elope, for elopements [583]
are frequent and not very scandalous in Burma.

In our childhood, when the family was big with growing children, we had five girls with us at one time. Of these, three were our relatives —two sisters, Ma Ohn Kyi and Ma Mya Shwe, who were third cousins of my father, and Ma Ngwe Yin, a second cousin of my mother. Both their families were far too poor to keep them. We had to pay respect to Ma Ohn Kyi and Ma Ngwe Yin who were both a few years older than me and called us all by our name, but nobody stopped us from bullying the young Mya Shwe and the two unrelated girls as much as we liked. A-Kyi, as we called Ma Ohn Kyi, was always treated as the senior one because my parents considered that she had a good moral character.

592 She was fairly pretty, very quiet and reserved towards us, and enjoyed
357 helping my mother with the babies, supervising the work of the servant girls and valeting my father. Ngwe Yin, who came to us as a very attractive girl with a reputation for being unmanageable even at a young age, always chose the task of taking us for walks in the evenings so that she could put on her nice clothes. She took us wherever she liked, or she sat with us at meal times and let us be as naughty as we wanted while she indulged in repartee with my father's clerks or chauffeur. Mya Shwe was my contemporary and playmate; she went to school while I was in boarding school but cut short her attendances the day I came home, irrespective of differences in our school calendars.

357 When A-Kyi was about nineteen it was announced to us that she
584 was to be married to my father's clerk, Maung Hla Bu. This young man was a favourite of my parents and had been a constant admirer of A-Kyi, helping her to make the beds when my father took the whole family on tours, but awaiting the graciousness of my parents before he dared to ask for her in marriage. My mother gave A-Kyi a small trousseau and a few pieces of jewellery, and they were married shortly before my father got a posting to another station. When a child was born, Mya Shwe, who had outgrown her days as a playmate for me, went to stay with them. Ngwe Yin, the beautiful girl, continued discontentedly for about a year, and then she eloped with a student protégé of my father's. I don't think either of my parents were very shocked at this.

357 My memories of the girls who worked for us are happy enough only
565 because my mother had been brought up in Grandfather's house where everyone was taught to do things for herself; in her character also was a pervading sense of tolerance. In some minkadaws' houses, however, I have seen two girls kneeling with soap and towel outstretched, while the mistress bathed herself. In more cheerful but no less aristocratic-minded households a meal laid ready on the table is the signal for one girl to get under the table and fan the mosquitoes off the legs of the family, and another to play the gramophone right through the meal My gay young uncle San Lin extended the domestic duties of his girls to the learning of modern songs which he liked, and he did his morning dressing to the accompaniment of his servant girls with powder on their faces and jasmine buds in their hair, swinging their feather brooms to the rhythm of modern love songs.

592 A-Kyi and A-Shwe and all the girls we had before and after them
431 bring back memories of the household articles which made with them a
513 background never recovered in our later Rangoon days. My mother,
286 like all minkadaws in the districts, did not depend on a big bazaar and
511

shops to supply her with goods, but took a special pride in buying each product from the town where the best quality of it was manufactured. She could do this either by my father's being posted within its district, by going there on a pagoda-visiting expedition, or by having relatives posted there; and a survey of all the household possessions I can remember makes a cross-section of Burmese crafts. All our blankets were Burmese *saungs*, good stoutly woven cotton pieces, about 7 feet long and 4½ feet wide. We had single ones of red, black and yellow stripes which looked very bright and barbaric; they came from the Chin Hills. We used these in the hotter months. During the colder months we used thicker *ok-saungs* which we got from Pakokku; they were 14 feet long and used doubled, with a fringe at both ends. These were woven very strong and white, with bold red stripes on them in pleasing combinations. All these saungs washed more and more beautiful to our childish eyes. My mother had a big collection of them in wooden chests and some of them have lasted 30 years and are still beautiful.

She was also very jealous of her collection of *hpyas*, mats for sleeping or sitting on, woven closely of the fibres of a reed called *thabaw*, or, finer still, of the outer skin of a grass-like plant, the *thin*. These light and flexible mats or *thinbyu* came from Laymyethna, "The Town of Four Faces". They were equally smooth on both sides and had velvet borders piped on, broad at one end and narrower at the other, to distinguish the head end for nobler use, and to be sure of always resting the feet on the same ignoble end. We had them in big sizes for the beds and for afternoon naps on the verandah, and smaller sizes for prayers and for visitors to sit on. My mother kept them in rolls, five or six rolled together according to quality, covered with a cylinder of ticking and stood end up along her dressing-room.

Although we used imported crockery for the table we could not do without Burmese pottery for other purposes. Water-pots and goblets of light pottery from Twante, near Rangoon, were necessary to keep the water cool. There must be special pots for the altar water, for washing faces, for drinking water (in which pot, however, we kept a sand filter bought from Rangoon), and goblets in all bedrooms. For baths we had big black voluminous jars from Upper Burma, of a less porous pottery with a salt glaze on it, about 30 inches high and wide-mouthed. Smaller ones like these were kept for pickling mangoes and other green fruits. In the kitchen also, the modern aluminium pots would not do for such purposes as cooking acid leaves and fish curry that had tamarind in it; an earthen pot was always used for *chimbaung*, roselle leaves. Moreover, the *salaungbon*, or cover, of an earthern pot can always be used for baking fish paste, a daily

The houses were all built on the same pattern, only some being taller, wider and of better quality wood and thatch than others. 342

Facing the street in line, each house had a verandah running all along its face, and one step took you up from this into the main room of the house. As you entered, this room extended right up to the roof which sloped very steeply down to its eaves, but about twelve feet in, where the roof was just high enough, a platform upper storey was built, looking over a balustrade into the main room below. This platform storey ended where the sloping roof again became too low at the back. The back portion reaching to the height of the roof was used for kitchen and washing rooms. By this time, in the row of houses containing ours, the ground had sloped down to the creek, and the kitchen was continued as a bamboo platform raised high above the mud on piles.

Grandmother, who had become among the wealthiest in the village, had made enlargements and adaptations within these lines. Her house was wider, with the clearing up of an adjacent house. It contained four door spaces in its face, each door space being a uniform seven feet in width throughout the village. The main floor was of fine polished teak boards, the part below the platform storey was walled off into a bedroom which was very badly ventilated and lighted, the back portion was cleared of all washing rooms and made into a large airy kitchen about 30 feet square, and the platform behind was extended right over the water's edge because we had bought a mooring site further up. On this bamboo platform two hatches were put as bathrooms, containing commodes in the European style, whereas other households walked to the common latrines in the first clearing beyond the street.

The people of Ye lived chiefly by the produce of their gardens, the richer ones like Grandmother sending out to big towns their durians, coconuts, areca nuts, or fish and oysters from the sea, the poorer ones vending fish and vegetables daily around the town, making thatch roofing out of *dani* (nipah) leaves, acting as boatmen up and down the creek, helping to work the gardens and paddy-fields of other families. 244 226 463

My grandmother's household during these years consisted of herself, two aunts, one widow and one spinster, an uncle next to my father in age, my young Uncle Pyant and various cousins, one, two and three wombs removed from us. My elder uncle, Uncle Thet Hnan, had never been out of Ye; after going through the monastery he had worked in the gardens instead of going to an English-teaching school. It gave us an uncanny feeling to see him so like my father in build and general appearance and so dissimilar from him in speech, thought and habits. He now owned gardens up at Chaung-bya, and had five children all of whom had been brought up in Ye. My three boy cousins had been 592

[1st Ye--Analyst]

•592 sent to stay with us at various times and were sent to schools which taught English, but nothing would persuade them to take any interest in studies. My cousin Nyein Maung, whom I liked very much, could never bear to keep a shirt on, which was why he was always to be found with only a longyi tucked around his loins playing chinlon or helping boatmen with their canoes, when he should have been sitting fully clothed in a class-room.

[601] My young Uncle Pyant, whom we called U-Ngè, small Uncle, had 693 passed his B.A. and his law degree, and returned to Ye in preference to 177 a more modern life in a larger town. He walled off one doorway's space 164 from the main room of the house and filled it with bookcases, a big desk and chairs for visitors. Outside this room my Uncle Pyant put up a sign saying: *"A-htet-tan shaynay gyi:* Advocate and Higher Grade Pleader," and within a very short time became the lawyer of the whole village; but so great was his attachment to this consultation-living-room, which had nothing in common with the rest of Ye, that he relinquished all cases whose developing complexities led client and lawyer to a higher court in Moulmein.

592 Grandmother had gardens about ten miles up the creek from Ye.
244 These contained coconuts, durians and areca nuts grown over about
276 fifty acres for commercial disposal. Around the bungalow in the centre
427 of the garden there grew mangosteen, rambutan, pomeloes and pineapples for eating on a large-scale, clumps of bamboos, a coffee tree, tobacco plants, capsicum, lime and citron trees, lemon grass, and vegetables of all kinds to serve the needs of the bungalow and the household in town. My aunts with one young male relative took turns to live at the garden and help the family that was hired to look after it permanently. It was a dangerous life in these plantations as dacoities were very frequent. [501] The produce was taken down to Ye in a succession of graceful narrow boats shaped out of single tree trunks. The durians and coconuts were [447] sold straight away to traders who travelled between Moulmein and Ye for this purpose. The areca nuts were first dried on a bamboo attic made by an extension of the platform upper storey of the house until it met the back slope of the roof. When they were dried the whole family gathered around in the back kitchen and removed the husks with blunted nutcrackers, leaving the smooth nut to be sold.

244 With the rice from the paddy-land on the opposite bank, fruits,
262 vegetables and spices from the garden, rolling their cheroots with a mix-
226 ture containing tobacco in leaves shed by the areca trees in the garden,
438 and grinding their own coffee berries, my aunts and grandmother only
276 needed to buy a little fish and meat for their daily consumption. This they could not provide themselves owing to the Buddhist law against

593 177. 57 always do so, at home and everywhere else, but mother understands that you make habits easily at your English school. Never walk into the house with your slippers on, as you do in the downstairs room here. When you eat with your grandmother and aunts, don't touch anything until your aunts have put a little of it into Grandmother's plate. And try not to talk to one another in English." All the way in the train my sisters would fling themselves at me and shout, "Big Elder Sister, Big Big Elder Sister."

528 592 264 We went to Ye during our summer holidays which were the longest in the school year and allowed us three weeks with my father and a month at Ye. It also enabled us to pay obeisance to our grandmother at the New Year, and to celebrate this loveliest of festivals in its most fitting surroundings. My Uncle San Lin usually sent his wife and our four small cousins at the same time, so that for one month in the year at least Grandmother could feel that the world of big towns and English civilization had not robbed her of any family affection. Sleeping and eating arrangements for the gathering of twenty odd people were no problems for the simple large-scale economy of the household. My mother had a bed, and beside it my Aunt Khin and all the children slept on thinbyus laid side by side on the platform upper storey. Meals were eaten in successive rounds at a low table on the kitchen floor, not served as separate sittings, but by calling more diners as places were vacated, and filling each dish that diminished from the stove near-by.

529 177 Half of our visit to Ye was spent at the garden where we were surrounded by rich fruits and could bathe in the clear swift water that rushed through islands of reeds. We walked and rode in bullock carts

for miles, to visit other gardens owned by Grandmother's friends—old men and women who lived there all the time, and who chuckled with delight to see us, for to them we were not ourselves, not ordinary

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma AP1
Burmese AP4
Chinese

Be
532
BeBa
[532]
[774]

tells us that the American Indian chief was in a state of great alarm lest his soul might be carried off with his picture. A notion of the same kind appears in the Chinese custom of getting a priest to put in the pupil of the eye, a method which often has rather a ghastly effect when the reverend gentleman is not skilful. Similarly, every Chinese-owned craft, from the sampan to the English-built iron screw steamer, has a couple of eyes painted on its bows, in order that it may see the way. Down in the Straits, and in all places where there are many Chinese, the local steamers, whoever their owners may be, are all endowed with eyes. Were they not so favoured, no Chinaman would travel with them as a passenger, or send any of his goods aboard of them. The Burman is not troubled with any such fantastic notions, and has no objection whatever to sitting for his portrait, only, as King Mindôn said to Yule, they prefer a flattering likeness to an exact one. It is seldom, however, that a Burman has a picture gallery in his house, and the village artist usually confines himself to vivid-coloured sketches for the funeral of a pôngyi, or to be hung round the mandut, where the great people sit to look on at a play. The drawing and the perspective are naturally a little faulty, but the details are usually worked out with very creditable skill.

Be
532
353

517

Thus wandering about, seeing what his neighbours are doing, with an occasional visit to the monastery to have some edifying talk with the religious, the villager may spend the time very comfortably. Oftenest however, he stays at home, and waits for visitors to drop in and have a little gossip. The goodwife always has a little shop in the lower part of the building. There is hardly a single house in the whole village where something is not offered for sale: a few dried fish, betel-nut, with the fresh green leaves, lime, cardamoms, and cutch, all ready for making up, half a dozen cocoa-nuts, or perhaps some twopenny-ha'penny knives, looking-glasses, coloured tumblers, and paltry Manchester goods, or where there are many girls about the house, a few home-made lungyis and pasos, waist-cloths, woven at odd times in the loom which stands in the yard or in a corner of the verandah of every house. The stock-in-trade is

592
444
562

[286]

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

intended more as an excuse for people to enter the house and have a talk than with any idea of making a profit. Whatever money is drawn is regarded as a kind of pin-money for the mistress of the establishment. When the ladies of the household are in earnest about trading, they start a stall in the bazaar, and very good hands they are at driving a bargain. A more regrettable trait is the forcible character of their language when they are annoyed. But this, unhappily, is a characteristic of the fair sex all the world over, whether in trade or out of it. Certain it is that the *dames de la halle* and the Billingsgate fishwives would require all their powers of voice and vituperation to silence a bazaar maiden when she sets her mind to it.

There are as a general thing two meals only in the day: breakfast at about eight in the morning, and dinner at five in the afternoon. There is no difference in the *menu* of the two meals. The staple article of food is plain boiled rice, which is piled up in a heap on a huge platter, round about which the household arrange themselves, sitting, like pit-men, on their heels. The curry which is taken with it is placed in little bowls, and each one of the party has his own plate, and helps himself. Knives are unnecessary; spoons and forks and celestial chopsticks are unknown, except in the houses of a few Government officials and traders in Rangoon, who have had some experience of English society. Very few are able to afford curries of meat or fish, besides that there are not always unscrupulous people ready to disregard the law against taking life, and the material is therefore not always available. Ordinarily the curry consists of a soup, or thin concoction of vegetables, in which chillies and onions figure largely. The other ingredients are very various. Young shoots of bamboo are very delicate in their flavour, if not overpowered by too much garlic. Wild asparagus, the succulent stems of a number of aquatic plants and fleshy arums are constantly used, and may be seen exposed for sale in every bazaar. Tamarind leaves and those of the mango-tree are used by the very poor. The former have a somewhat acrid taste, the latter are curiously aromatic. Along with the curry, which has always a large amount of oil and salt in it, there are a variety of condiments, notably the

14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

III

SOCIAL GROUPS AND RELATIONS

In this section we describe the patterns of kinship and interpersonal relations, the beliefs and customs pertaining to the life cycle of the individual associations, and intergroup relations.*

Kinship

The kinship system reflects very clearly the bilateral family structure in the absence of terminological differentiation on the basis of the sex of the connecting relative. The other outstanding characteristic is the recognition at many points of relative age. For each generation a distinct set of kinship terms is employed. On the speaker's (ego's) generation, all cousins are merged with siblings, the terms being differentiated, however, according to relative age. In the first ascending generation, the parents' siblings are differentiated according to the degree of age relative to the parent. In the first descending generation the factor of relative age loses significance; sex is the sole basis of differentiation of kinship terms, except for separate terms to distinguish the speaker's own children from others. On successive descending generations sex distinction is absent and all relatives of a given generation are subsumed under a single kinship term.

Relative age is the all-important hub upon which the wheel of village social life revolves. Deference to one's elders is reflected in such customs as carrying objects for them, refraining from sitting with one's head higher than those of elders, and avoiding postures in which the feet are extended towards such persons.

Beyond such matters of etiquette, the importance of age is even more fundamentally demonstrated in the showing of obeisance to one's elders. This is done on all the important ceremonial occasions. Four such occasions are regarded as obligatory times for paying one's respects. These are the beginning and the end of Wasa (sometimes called the Buddhist 'Lent'), a period of about three months, roughly from mid-July to mid-October; the New Year; and the harvest. Respect is paid to all of one's elders in the parental generation and above. A visit is made at which an offering, valuable or symbolic, is brought and the elder's blessings are received.

Interpersonal Relations

Husband and Wife. The household is normally composed of husband and wife and their offspring. It is a bilateral, limited type of family structure, contrasting markedly with the patrilineal extended Chinese family and the joint family of India. Unlike the position of the wife in the traditional Chinese and Indian family systems, that of the Burmese wife is not one of an outsider living in a group dominated by her husband's relatives. Where a married couple resides is a matter of choice and is decided very largely on the basis of economic opportunity. When there is such opportunity in the village for an outsider who marries a girl of Tadagale, he is urged to establish their residence there, but there is no particular pressure or feeling about the

*The material on kinship and the life cycle, with certain changes, was published under the title "Burmese Kinship and the Life Cycle: an Outline" in Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, vol 7, no 4, 1951, pp. 437-454. The reader interested in the technical details of the kinship terms and a diagrammatic presentation of the kinship system is referred to that article. The author wishes to express his thanks to Mi Mi Khaing for valuable assistance in the compilation and analysis of the material on this aspect of the culture.

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

000 She spoke so fast, so fast; the words fell over each other as they came from her lips, for her heart was very full.

592 I sat quite still and said nothing; I think she hardly noticed I was there. It was all about her husband. Everything was wrong; all had gone crooked in their lives, and she did not know what she could do. At first she could hardly tell what it was all about, but at last she explained. For some years, three or four years, matters had not been very smooth between them. They had quarrelled often, she said, about this thing and the other, little things mostly; and gradually the rift had widened till it became very broad indeed.

'Perhaps,' she said, 'if I had been able to have a child it would have been different.' But fate was unkind and no baby came, and her husband became more and more angry with her. 'And yet I did all for the best, thakin; I always tried to act for the best. My husband has sisters at Henzada, and they write to him now and then, and say, "Send ten rupees," or "send five rupees," or even twenty rupees. And I always say, "Send, send." Other wives would say, "No, we cannot afford it"; but I said always, "Send, send." I have always done for the best, always for the best.'

It was very pitiable to hear her opening her whole heart, such a sore troubled heart, like this. Her words were full of pathos; her uncomely face was not beautified by the sorrow in it. And at last her husband took a second wife.

593 587 'She is a girl from a village near; the thakin knows, Taungywa. He did not tell me, but I soon

Introduction

This is a study of the falling standard of living of a Burmese family who were uprooted by the insurrection from their village home of Pathee in 1949 and transplanted in a refugee camp in Rangoon. The family consisted of U Myaing - a fisherman aged 47; hes wife Ma Aye Myaing, age 33, Daw Aw Zar, his mother, age 72, and four daughters - Ma Yin Shwe, age 14, Ma Khin Nyein, age 11, Ma Khni Saw, age 7, and Ma Win Tin, age 5.(1951).

An attempt is made to present quantitatively and qualitatively the items used in, and activities of everyday life in the home village as contrasted with the refugee camp. It is hoped this dynamic situation will reveal some of the basic facts of Burmese culture as they pertain to an average family. The bulk of the data was collected under my direction by Ko Sein Tu, Tutor of the Psychology Department, University of Rangoon, from August 1950 to May 1951. Ko Nya Tu, medical student at the University, helped in collecting the health data. Ma Khin Hmway, Assistant in Anthropology at the University, collected some of the more personal data from the ladies of the family. Professor Mohinda Nath, Head of the Department of Biology, University of Rangoon, kindly arranged for the scientific identification of the food items. Part of the data was collectedby the use of a tape recorder portions of which are reproduced verbation in this report. Miss Mary Watson, Head Stenographer of the Community Project, gave her valuable help in proof reading and typing the stencils for this report.

A setting for the better understanding of the facts of the family is given in sections on general Burmese Concepts which follow the family data. This was provided by Ko Maung Than, student at the University, who worked as my assistant from August through November 1951.

I am endebted to Dr. Htin Aung, Professor of Anthropology and Rector of the University of Rangoon for his constant support and encouragement in this study. I carried out the study as a Fulbright grantee in Anthropology attached to the United States Educational Foundation in Rangoon, to whose officers I am grateful

342 514 In U Myaing's house the lavatory is in the kitchen and is walled off with woven KYU (kind of fiber) mat. There is a hole cut open in the board flooring, and the area underneath this opening also is walled off with woven KYU. U Myaing and family did not take their meals in the kitchen but in the house proper.

361 368 346 The PHON-GYI KYAUNG or monastery is located further downstream from the village. It is a two storied brick building comprised of nine rooms, each 6 TAUNG square. Children are not taught here but learn their lessons at the government school. This school, which is on [872] [364] THA-GYI-MYO side, teaches pupils up to the tenth standard. Below the PHON-GYI KYAUNG is the cemetery.

The houses in the village are separated one from the other by eight feet on each side. The rows of houses facing the river have porches on 342 both sides. U Myaing's house is typical of those found in the village - some may be more elaborate, some less. His house had been built only 435 six or seven years, and cost Rs. 3000/- at that time. There are no [651] accounts for each of the separate items and U Myaing does not remember. The land was free and they did not have to pay any revenue on it.

[366] Separate from the houses and on the riverside is a huge platform built [252] to process fish including the making of NGAPI. U Myaing had no land that [illegible] owned round the house, although he could use the land directly in front of the house for various purposes.

U Myaing describes his house as follows;

342 592 "It is a wooden house, made of wooden posts - a two storied structure. The roof is of slates. Walls are of THI-NGA-MU wooden boards (boards 8 inches wide and about ¾ inch thick) and there are four rooms. Other people have similar houses. It is a LAY-HSE-KHAN (a four-tree-house or a house which has four supporting poles across the front) and all seven of us live in the house. We drop a kitchen from the back and cook there. The kitchen has three windows at the back, with one door leading into the house. We all live together in three rooms. We keep bedrooms. (U Myaing is speaking of a sketch of the house here). This side is for visitors - there is a room for people who come to buy goods. The old mother and the children live in one room and I and my wife in [366] another with the smallest child. We eat in the front part of the house in one room at the foot of the sleeping place. There are nine 6 TAUNG rooms without partitions on each of the two floors. The sides of the house are enclosed with timber planks of IN wood but the bedrooms are also partitioned off. It is very wide and roomy to live in. The floor is made of teak planks."

cloth, small enough to keep mosquitos out. The other kind was made of plain cloth to keep out the smallest insects. The nets are rectangular for a single bed, square for a double. They are suspended over the bed on a wooden framework and tucked under the mattress. Pathwe: three were used by the family and two kept in reserve. Each lasted 4 or 5 years. The reserve nets cost Rs. 60/- each, the others Rs. 40/- or 45/- each. Camp: one old one was brought from Pathwe, this is used by U Myaing and his wife. The rest of the family have none. Two are desired.

513

[435]

TA-BYET-SHE, broom: The hand broom is used to brush out dust and dirt from the floor of the house. It is about 2 feet long, 2 inches in diameter and consists of bent over bunches of stiff reeds bound at the top by a more flexible reed strip. The one used in camp cost 12 annas in Rangoon.

356
415

Burmese Concepts about the Home.

The following Burmese ideas about the home were secured mainly from Ko Maung Than, my research assistant.

342
183

The Burmese regard the KIN-YAR (home place) with great love, and as the most essential feature of life. The head of a family will frequently admonish: "My young ones let us remain with our nest intact and our eggs uncracked", this is also a common prayer. The ideal is to preserve the family home with necessary repairs in its original form. Wooden (teak) houses are preferred to bamboo. The husband and wife are partners in the ownership of the home which they start at marriage. Indeed, the word for "marriage" KIN-DAUNG-PYU (Home-separately-build) emphasizes the importance of building a home upon starting a family. In villages the mother and children spend almost all of their time in and around the home. Since the Burmese are especially sedentary, short journeys being unusual and infrequent events, the house is the spot where he lives and dies. It is furthermore his "castle" and place of security within which he is "ruler".

[592]

[591]

[484]

Each house is under the direct protection of MIN MAHA-GIRI one of the 37 major nats of Burma. He controls the fortunes of the family and in return is revered. A coconut, the symbol of MIN-

342
776
782

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

38. yauccá Husband (referential).
39. mù Husband's younger brother; husband's younger sister's husband. 601
40. khḛ̀ʔóu Elder sister's husband; husband's elder brother; husband's elder sister's husband.
41. yaummà Husband's sister; husband's brother's wife.

As may readily be seen by inspection of the charts, this kinship system reflects clearly the bilateral family structure, with an absence of terminological differentiation on the basis of the sex of the connecting relative. The other outstanding characteristic is the recognition of relative age at many points. For each generation a distinct set of terms is used. On ego's generation all cousins are merged with siblings; the terms are differentiated, however, according to relative age. In the first ascending generation, it will be noted, parents' siblings are terminologically distinguished according to degree of age relative to the parent. In the first descending generation, however, the factor of age loses significance; sex is the sole differentiating factor, apart from distinguishing terms for ego's own children. On successive descending generations sex distinction is absent and all relatives of a single generation are subsumed under a single kinship term.

Behaviorally as well as terminologically, relative age is the all-important hub upon which the wheel of Burmese social life revolves. Deference to one's elders is reflected in such customs as carrying things for them, refraining from sitting with one's head higher than those of elders, and avoiding postures in which the feet are extended towards such persons. 561 602 [516]

Beyond such matters of etiquette, the importance of age is even more fundamentally demonstrated in the showing of obeisance to one's elders. This is done on all the important ceremonial occasions. Four such occasions are regarded as obligatory times for paying one's respects. These are the beginning and the end of the Buddhist "Lent"—a period of about three months, roughly from mid-July to mid-October—the New Year, and the harvest. Respect is paid to all of one's elders in the parental generation and above. A visit is made at which an offering, valuable or symbolic, is brought and the elder's blessings are received. [782]

SOCIAL RELATIONS OF KIN

Husband–Wife. The household is normally composed of husband and wife and their offspring. It is a bilateral, limited type of family structure, contrasting markedly with the patrilineal extended Chinese family and joint family of India. Unlike the position of the wife in the Chinese and Indian family systems, that of the Burmese wife is not one of an outsider living in a group dominated by her 593 [592] [594]

[Text continues on page 442]

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

593 husband's kinfolk. Post-marital residence is independent and is decided very [591] largely on the basis of economic opportunity. The wife's opportunities for social intercourse with her family of orientation are, of course, greatest when residence is established in her home village; if, however, a couple from different villages marry and find it most opportune to settle in the husband's community, the [574] chances are that the wife will maintain contact with her family of orientation by [582] visits from time to time; such marriages seldom unite persons from villages that are very far apart. The very structural features of bilaterality and absence of extension militate against inequality and male domination.

562 Burmese culture is frequently remarked for the equality of the sexes, in con-
593 trast to the neighboring cultures of India and China. This status of the sexes seems to be the resultant historically of two patterns of thought. One is an apparently very old, pre-Buddhist emphasis upon equality, involving equal inheri- [428] tance, equal sharing of the property brought to the marriage, equal division of [586] property upon divorce, a prominent female role in social and economic life, and an absence of transmission of surnames. The other thought pattern dates from the superimposition of Buddhism upon older Burmese conceptions: whatever [177] ideas of male superiority exist in Burmese life stem from Buddhist notions of [775] reincarnation. Although Buddha never expressed himself explicitly on the matter, it is taken for granted that only a male can attain Nirvana, since Gautama Buddha, who attained that state, was a male.

462 In the family household the wife's role includes not only such routine tasks as
● 592 the preparation of food and serving of meals, keeping the house orderly and clean, and looking after small children; very often it involves control of the family income and the making of all important decisions as to expenditures.

593 Certain observances and taboos, reflective of deference to males, are expected
784 of the female partner in marriage. She is careful that her lower garments do not touch her husband's bed or his personal belongings; she avoids touching her husband's head. It is believed that the breaking of such taboos may ruin the husband's success and glory, especially his spiritual attainments. These injunctions are followed as a matter of course by Burmese wives and will be broken deliberately only as an act of spite by a woman who wishes to harm or lower her husband for some reason.

593 Despite the various equalitarian aspects of husband-wife relations, there is
837 a tendency towards a double standard of sexual behavior. A husband who has reason to believe that his wife is engaging in extra-marital affairs is very likely [586] to display violent anger, beat her, and break up the marriage. The wife of a

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

153. THE CHALLENGE
(*see* p. 177).

the young wife's home, the lad working for her parents. As family comes and other daughters marry, the elder pairs are established in houses of their own. Married people are designated *ein-daung*—householders. Marriage makes no difference in the names and their prefixes. Everyone marries in Burma; the census of 1891 gave 1,306,722 husbands to 1,307,292 wives. The same census gave 102 females to 100 males of the Burman (so classed as Buddhist) population. (In Burma prostitution is confined to the large towns.)

A family of seven is considered large. The average number of house-occupants is 5.5. The cost of living of a Burman village household is 100 to 200 Rs. a year. In the towns the well-to-do spend 600 to 1000 Rs. and more, and at the present day keep a servant or two for the rough work, generally natives of India. Such accumulations of wealth as are made by individuals in India and other countries with a plutocracy and a proletariate are not paralleled among the Burmans. Nevertheless individuals amass tens of thousands of rupees, which for the most part they spend on works of religious merit. Monogamy is the received and almost universal practice in Burma. Second-wives are taken by a proportion of the officials and men of wealth. Hence it comes that the Burmans wonder more at the moderation of Europeans than at such license as they indulge. This license is not nearly so great as in India, but it is more open, corresponding to the higher status of the women of Burma, and thus it provokes more scandal in comparison. Unions of this sort among the Burmans are merely by mutual consent. A separate establishment in a different quarter of the town is maintained for the second wife or concubine (*maya-ngè*). Her children are under no disability, but she is not acknowledged by the first, and generally older, wife (*mayaji*), whose husband's love she is said to have stolen.

154. AN "ORIGINAL"